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ABSTRACT

This is a self-assessment for Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC), Nevada. Assessment efforts at the College are intended to engage faculty and administration in a continuous process of examining the quality of programs and services. The assessment addresses the following issues: (1) student learning improvement; (2) demonstrating academic responsibility; (3) commitment to standards; (4) continuous quality improvement; (5) accountability; (6) celebrating the success of programs and services; and (7) encouraging the use of assessment results in the decision-making process. This report gives a brief description, methodology, and progress and outcomes analyses for the following assessment indicators: (1) performance indicators; (2) student follow-up research and climate surveys; (3) Perkins III performance indicators; (4) program outcomes assessment; (5) program review; (6) general education outcomes assessment; (7) matriculation evaluation and research; (8) placement test validation; (9) course outcomes assessment; and (10) course prerequisites. At TMCC, assessment takes place at three distinct levels: institutional, program and departmental, and course and unit level. The report notes that in order to be effective, assessment must be a comprehensive, multi-level process that is flexible enough to adopt a variety of approaches in assessing quality and monitoring improvement of services and student learning. (NB)

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ED 476 685

Truckee Meadows Community College Assessment Report

October 2002

Office of Institutional Research and Assessment

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Office of Educational Research and Improvement
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1

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ASSESSMENT at TMCC

Assessment Philosophy

TMCC is committed to improving the student learning process through the continual assessment of institutional effectiveness. Assessment efforts at the College are intended to engage faculty and administration in a continuous process of examining the quality of programs and services. Assessment at TMCC is about:

- Student learning improvement
- Demonstrating academic responsibility
- Commitment to standards
- Continuous quality improvement
- Accountability
- Celebrating the success of our programs and services
- Encouraging the use of assessment results in the decision-making process

TMCC faculty and administration believe in continuous assessment of college programs and services and their relationship to the college mission, values and strategic direction. Assessment directly relates and drives one of the major college initiatives: Achieving Academic Excellence.

The Academic Excellence Initiative emphasizes student learning. The efforts of faculty and administration are directed at ensuring continual progress, keeping teaching and learning at the core of our mission, supporting innovation and faculty development, recruiting and hiring qualified faculty, reviewing our programs, and regularly asking ourselves what we can do to establish the highest expectations for all of our students.

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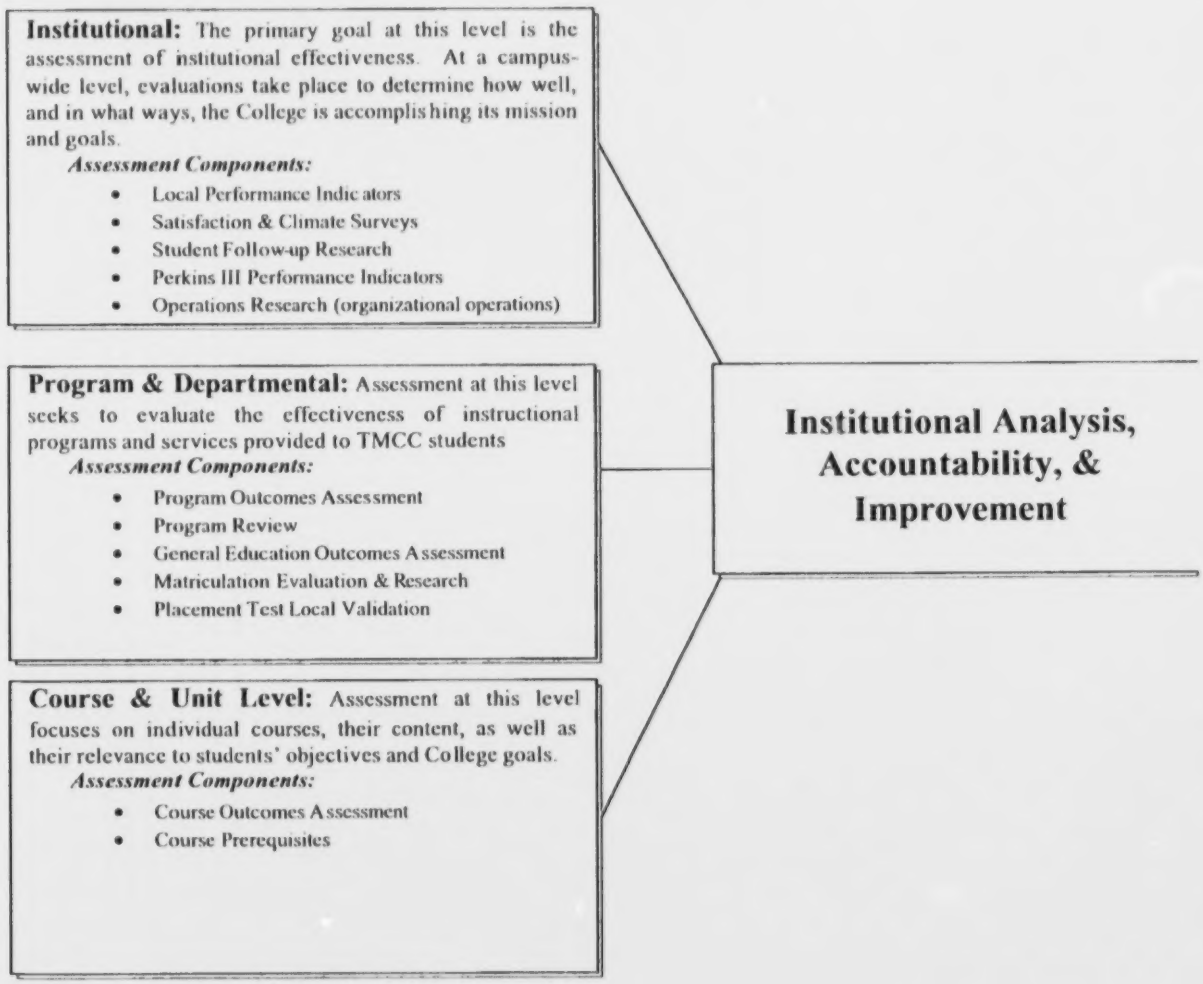
ASSESSMENT at TMCC

Levels of Assessment

It is critical for the success of assessment as a campus-wide initiative to clearly determine its place and articulate its relevance to the entire planning and operational process of the College. In order to become an effective effort, assessment must be a comprehensive, multi-level process that is flexible enough to adopt a variety of approaches in assessing quality and monitoring improvement of services and student learning. At TMCC, assessment takes place at three distinct levels:


Institutional: The primary goal at this level is the assessment of institutional effectiveness. At a campus-wide level, evaluations take place to determine how well, and in what ways, the College is accomplishing its mission and goals.
Assessment Components:
• Local Performance Indicators
• Satisfaction & Climate Surveys
• Student Follow-up Research
• Perkins III Performance Indicators
• Operations Research (organizational operations)
Program & Departmental: Assessment at this level seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional programs and services provided to TMCC students
Assessment Components:
• Program Outcomes Assessment
• Program Review
• General Education Outcomes Assessment
• Matriculation Evaluation & Research
• Placement Test Local Validation
Course & Unit Level: Assessment at this level focuses on individual courses, their content, as well as their relevance to students' objectives and College goals.
Assessment Components:
• Course Outcomes Assessment
• Course Prerequisites
Institutional Analysis, Accountability, & Improvement

DESCRIPTION

College-wide performance indicators are measured on an annual basis. The indicators are categorized into six *areas of inquiry*. The measurement of TMCC's performance indicators covers a broad array of outcomes-based assessment at the institutional level.

METHODS

Performance indicators are documented on a one-page template that records the following items: area of inquiry, rationale, definition, source, and outcome analysis. Each indicator is a self-contained piece of research that is meant to quickly inform the reader on progress made by the institution, as well as the methodology utilized to compute the measure. There are six areas of inquiry: Access and Equity, Employment Preparation & Placement, Instructional Effectiveness, Resource Effectiveness, Occupational and Vocational Workforce Training, Developmental and Remedial.

PROGRESS & OUTCOMES

Spring 2002 marks the fifth year in which performance indicators have been measured at TMCC. The indicators have been adjusted from their original edition to reflect a core set of measurable outcomes. Performance indicators are completed and reviewed by institution on an annual basis.

DESCRIPTION

A variety of methods are employed to conduct student follow-up research. In addition to utilizing enrollment and transcript data to track student success, TMCC engages in three annual survey research endeavors. First, all graduates are asked to complete a questionnaire inquiring about their level of satisfaction with general and technical education, as well as selected student services. Second, a one-year graduate follow-up survey is disseminated aimed at assessing the impact the College has had upon its graduates. To compliment these research projects, every three years the College distributes campus-wide student, faculty, and staff climate surveys, as well as a community/employer questionnaire.

METHODS

Each survey research project contains it own specific methodology.

PROGRESS & OUTCOMES

The Office of Institutional Research & Assessment conducts all campus-wide satisfaction, climate, and follow-up surveys. All survey results are posted on the TMCC web site.

DESCRIPTION

In compliance with the Nevada Department of Education and Carl Perkins funding requirements, TMCC completes a series of occupational related performance indicators. This research combines cohort tracking, academic performance, and graduation rate measures for all occupational students, as well as a variety of special populations.

METHODS

This set of performance indicators seeks to measure the success of occupational students who meet a defined threshold of vocational/technical training at the college. A cohort of first-time, vocational degree-seeking students are isolated. This cohort is then given three years to accumulated occupational-related credit hours (threshold). Grade point average, graduation rate, and enrollment in non-traditional courses are then tracked.

PROGRESS & OUTCOMES

The Office of Institutional Research & Assessment is responsible for computing the Perkins III performance indicators and does so on an annual basis. Performance indicators report is submitted to the Nevada Department of Education on an annual basis.

DESCRIPTION

Program Outcomes Assessment is the systematic gathering, interpretations, and use of information about student learning for purposes of improvement of all TMCC programs (sequence of courses, degree or certificate). Outcomes Assessment process encourages TMCC programs to make expectations and standards for quality explicit and public. Each program is expected to engage in a systematic gathering of evidence on how well performance matches those expectations and standards. Any proposal for a new/revised program, degree or certificate must be accompanied by the outcomes assessment plan reviewed by the Institutional Research & Assessment Office.

METHODS

All TMCC programs are encouraged to develop the assessment process in a way that is most responsive to the needs of their program. However, all programs must adhere to the following general principles and methods of developing and assessing program outcomes:

1. Program outcomes are assessed for the entire program or selected sequence of courses.
2. Program outcomes are expressed as skills, knowledge areas, and/or changes in attitude that program expects students to express as a result of successfully completing the program/sequence of courses.
3. Program outcomes are measurable and assessable.
4. Multiple assessment methods are used (direct, indirect)
5. Program Assessment Plans are reviewed every 3 years.
6. Program Outcomes Assessment results are collected on an annual basis and stored by either department or Office of Institutional Research and Assessment.
7. Program Outcomes Assessment results are analyzed and used for planning and improvement process.

PROGRESS & OUTCOMES

Currently the majority of TMCC programs (26) have completed their outcomes assessment plans and these documents are published on the TMCC web site. Fifteen programs are due to report the results of their assessment activities by the end of the Fall 2002 semester, with the remaining programs reporting the results next Fall 2003.

DESCRIPTION

Program Review is a means of reporting on collected data about the vitality of TMCC programs. This is a tool to measure programmatic effectiveness, the results of which are used for programmatic improvement. Program review evaluates programs based on the following categories: enrollment trends, staffing trends, physical facilities, and equipment. The review includes multiple criteria of assessment, including both qualitative and quantitative dimensions of program effectiveness, and peer review.

METHODS

A model was designed within the last year that outlines the process of program review campus-wide. It is the role of the department chair, coordinator or responsible faculty assigned by the Dean to compile the necessary information to write the evaluation of the program addressing both strengths and weaknesses. Reviews may result in one or more recommendations which require a plan to improve some aspect of a program. In such case, a program will be asked to develop a plan to address the recommendations. The formal program review is on a 5-year cycle. In particular situations, a review is conducted after the first year of a new program. An impartial expert from outside TMCC may be called to write the Program Review.

PROGRESS & OUTCOMES

Program Review is conducted according to the schedule prepared by the Office of the Academic Vice President. The following programs have been reviewed during 2001-2002 academic year:
Dental Hygiene
Radiologic Technology

DESCRIPTION

All students receiving degrees at TMCC are requiered to complete a set of general education courses from ten general education areas: Communications, English, Diversity, Fine Arts, Human Relations, Science, Constitution, Humanities, Mathematics, Social Science. Assessment of general education consists of identifying specific outcomes of general education courses and evaluating the achievement of those outcomes.

METHODS

The general education learning outcomes are reflected in the general education core (i.e. required classes that every student must take in order to receive a degree). All courses designated as general education courses are required to demonstrate to the Curriculum Committee how the content of the course reflects the general education skills and how student success in acquiring those skills is evaluated. In addition, each of the ten general education areas develops outcomes and identifies measures to assess student skills and learning experiences using home-grown assessment methods embedded in the curriculum.

PROGRESS & OUTCOMES

Currently, a campus-wide initiative on general education is underway. Each general education area, which is comprised of various courses, is in the process of identifying specific outcomes and tools to assess the effectiveness of student learning in each area respectively. In addition, the Academic Standards subcommittee of the Faculty Senate is finalizing the statement of general education philosophy at TMCC.

DESCRIPTION

In Fall 2001 TMCC implemented a new matriculation policy. This initiative was carried out through QUEST (Quality Education Starts at TMCC), a first-year experience program designed to help students be successful in college from the start. This program representes a concerted effort on the part of the college to expose first-time students to a variety of student services in order to maximaize their academic success. Students are given adviseinent with the oportunity to creat an education plan, assessment, early registration, college success skills course, etc.

METHODS

All new first-time students enrolling in 12 or more credits are encouraged to sign up for QUEST. As QUEST participants, upon taking assessment tests and receiving advisement, these students are enrolled in math, English, study success skills courses and elective of their choice during the first semester. The progress and success of participants is monitored by surveying students and conducting follow-up student success research.

PROGRESS & OUTCOMES

The QUEST program is in its third semester. Enrollment in the program nearly doubled (from 99 students in Fall 2001 to 162 students in Fall 2002 with addition of 30 international students). Follow-up research conducted indicates that QUEST participants persist at a higher rate than first-time degree-seeking students who did not participate in the program.

DESCRIPTION

The local validation of the College's placement test (ACCUPLACER) must occur on an ongoing basis. Validation research entails establishing a relationship between a criterion measure (e.g., final grades) and placement test scores. Validation efforts are essential for ensuring that placement test scores possess an acceptable level of predictive validity and connection to TMCC's curriculum.

METHODS

In order to conduct a validation study the following must be in place:

1. A statistically significant number of students who have taken the placement test and enrolled in courses requiring a test score
2. An agreed upon criterion measure (grades vs. instructor ratings)
3. Standardized competencies and expected outcomes throughout a curriculum utilizing placement test scores

PROGRESS & OUTCOMES

Several validation studies have taken place. A study of student success in Math 096 (Intermediate Algebra) has been conducted, tracking further success in Math 120 (College Level Math). This study correlated the placement of students based on ACCUPLACER scores with their success in the course of placement and subsequent course. Similar studies have been conducted in English 090 (remedial course). The placement rates in math and English are monitored every Fall semester. In addition, a testing and placement system has been developed for ESL students.

DESCRIPTION

This process is focusing on individual courses outcomes and their assessment.

METHODS

All faculty members at TMCC are encouraged to outline and assess individual course outcomes. The Master Course Outline required for every course, must include course outcomes and description of how those outcomes are to be assessed. Before any new or revised course is approved the TMCC Curriculum Committee reviews the Master Course Outline to ensure assessment in individual courses. On-going research is conducted by faculty members in conjunction with the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment to track student success in individual courses.

PROGRESS & OUTCOMES

In addition to the efforts by the Curriculum Committee, workshops are conducted annually to provide for faculty's exchange of best assessment practices, as well as opportunities to receive new information on most effective classroom assessment techniques. Below are just a few examples of the types of studies conducted on an on-going basis that are focused on assessment of individual courses:

- **Chemistry 101 Assessment Project**: multi-semester project designed to pilot-test a chemistry placement instrument by the National Chemical Society, research correlation between completion of college level math and success in basic chemistry course and to gather information about students' study habits
- **Math 091 & 093 Study**: this assessment project focused on assessing performance of students in the most basic remedial math courses, aimed at identifying ways of developing more precise assessment and placement of students
- **Student Success in Computer-based Math Courses vs. Traditional Math Courses**: this project investigated the success of students in Math 095courses (Elementary Algebra) using a computer-based mode of instructions in comparison to Math 095 courses taught in a more traditional lecture format.

DESCRIPTION

The primary goal of this assessment activity is to streamline the process of assigning, enforcing and tracking course prerequisites, as well as monitoring their effectiveness on an on-going basis.

METHODS

Majority of course prerequisites are driven by the common course numbering system-wide initiative. Locally, TMCC monitors the effectiveness of prerequisites by tracking success of students enrolling in courses requiring prerequisites. English, math and science courses are most often the focus of such studies. Many vocational and occupational programs have external accreditation requirements driving their prerequisite policies which are monitored through the outcomes assessment process by individual programs.

PROGRESS & OUTCOMES

A database of all prerequisites has been compiled. Catalog and class schedule references to all math and English related prerequisites have been standardized to allow for inclusion of multiple options for students to satisfy prerequisites to any given course (i.e. ACT/ SAT, local placement test, prerequisite course, transfer courses from other colleges). Below are examples of recent studies on courses prerequisites conducted at TMCC:

- **Social Sciences Prerequisites Study**: this study examined the possibility of instituting discipline-specific prerequisites (i.e. a lower level course must be completed before a student can sign up for the next subsequent course in the discipline). In addition, the relation between completion of an English course and success in social science courses was examined.
- **Accounting Prerequisites Study**: this project investigated the logistical and academic impact of possible prerequisites to basic accounting courses.
- **Chemistry 101 Assessment Project**: one of the objectives of this multi-semester project is to establish a correlation between successful completion of college level math and success in basic chemistry course.
- **Prerequisites Survey for Department Chairs**: a college-wide survey of department chairs has been conducted to identify issues related to prerequisites and prospective research and assessment needs in those areas.

14

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